A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Thursday, March 10. 1709.

SAFE and HONOURABLE was the Word in my last relating to Peace; *Such a Peace or no Peace* is the Doctrine, let the Application be what it will. But now two Questions arise, and as I am speaking without Doors only, it is necessary to premise them.

1. Have the *French* really propos'd Peace, have they offer'd Preliminaries, and made such Concessions as are a sufficient Ground of a Treaty, or have they not? ——Otherwise to talk of Peace thus warmly, is the most Out-of-Season Business in the World.
2. What are the particular Significations of the Words SAFE and HONOURABLE, as they respect this Treaty?

Some are very angry, that *Britain* should listen to any Peace; the old Author of the *Observator's* Notion was very good; if we were fighting for Conquest, and not for Safety, *viz.* To revive the Queen's Claim to *Anjou*, *Poitou*, *Normandy*, *Gascogne*, &c. Depose the *French* King, say our warm Gentlemen, make Peace with him! *No, no*, down with him, tear him to peices, let his Peace be in the Grave, and let *English* Men possess his Towns and Ports, as they did *Bourdeaux*, for above 200 Years.

This requires no great Answer—— This we may do, as the *French* Man said, *when we can catch*—— But after that, could you possess all those Parts of *France* we formerly possess'd; it would ruin us, we would be undone, the open Commerce which Incorporations

porations of that Nature would make here —Would ſpoil us; we that are ſo afraid of bringing Strangers among us, tho' they are our Wealth in the End; what would become of us then? —But I wave that, and to come to Peace, without entring into any of the *Arcana* of publick Tranſactions. I ſuppoſe,

EITHER, The *French* offering Terms, and thoſe Terms now under Debate among the Confederates;

OR, The Confederates (knowing that Terms muſt be offer'd, and that perhaps it may come to a Neceſſity of treating of it in the Field, which muſt be ſhort Work) concerting and adjuſting among themſelves the Pretenſions and Demands of every particular Ally, and determining upon what Foot and no other, they will treat.

Upon this Suppoſition I may be allow'd to talk of Peace; and what if I ſhould, after the worthy and laudable Example of the *Daily-Courant*, give you a Scheme of a Peace———— I'll promiſe you, if I do, *I'll not beg Pardon for it the next Day*, no tho' all the Ambaſſadors, Envoys, Agents, &c. of *Europe* found Fault with it; I'll take Care it ſhall be ſo juſt, that no Body ſhall have Reaſon to find Fault—— And they that find Fault without Reaſon are none of my Concern, by whatſoever Empires, Kingdoms, Dutchies, Principalities, Governments, Titles, or Powers, they are dignified or diſtinguiſh'd.

But O the Treaty of PARTITION! You won't have the Impudence to bring that upon the Stage again, will you? *Says one to me*— No, no, Gentlemen, I'll be ſure to ſay nothing of that, becauſe no vilainous Railer ſhall have Room to revive that Barbariſm of FELONIOUS, and inſult the Queen upon it, as..... did her Royal and Glorious Predeceſſor.

Of the Laws about Inſolvent Debtors.

IN giving my Liſt of Particulars, I mean of the ſeveral Claſſes of Miſerables in this Nation, whom we call Inſolvents, I promis'd to explain my ſelf as to the laſt Article, *Viz.* Thoſe in actual Confinement, and ſubdivide them again: The Number of theſe I call 5000, who are actually immur'd and kept cloſe, and many of whom without Parliamentary Relief muſt periſh there, having no Hope of Liberty, but by Death or an Act of Parliament, which Act, I confeſs, I do not ſee ſo much Hopes of, as I once thought I ſhould, I mean as to its extending to the Relief of ſuch whoſe Debts are conſiderable, tho' their Diſtreſſes equal, if not exceed thoſe who are in for ſmaller Sums.

I ſhall therefore divide the ſuppoſed Number of 5000 into the following Parts; and tho' it is done but by probable Conjecture, yet if I am near the Truth, 'tis as exact as the Argument I am upon requires.

1. Of theſe 5000, I ſuppoſe, of meaner Tradeſmen, poor Handicrafts, and labouring People, whoſe Debts are from one Hundred Pounds downward about two Thouſand———Theſe live moſt of them in the common Sides, and are there fed by the Baſket, as 'tis call'd, or live by begging at the Grates of the Priſons; and tho' many of them ſuffer Hardſhip enough, yet generally ſpeaking, theſe live better than many in the Maſter-Sides of Priſons, whoſe Wants are inexpreſſible.
2. Of more Capital Tradeſmen, Gentlemen, and ſome Clergymen, whoſe Characters and Education, rather than Subſtance, have prevented going among the other, that cannot beg or feed on the Baſket, but endure a Thouſand more Miſeries and Extremities than thoſe that do, whoſe Hardſhips and Sufferings are born with Silence and

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Mourning of Soul, rather than Noise and loud Complainings: Of these I believe, there languishes, *for I cannot call it living*, in the several Gaols of this Nation, two Thousand more; of these 'tis observable, there dies Three for One of the first Sort, and that more miserably.

3. There are a higher Sort yet, and these consist of such Tradesmen and Gentlemen, who tho' not able to pay their Debt, and free themselves, have yet something left to bear them up under Prison-Charges, tho' it is wasting every Day, as well by the chargeable subsisting in Prison, as by their Families abroad; all their Affairs suffering a general Shipwreck, and the industrious Hands lock'd up from looking after their own Affairs. These are wasting and consuming, and being without Prospect of Deliverance, tho' for the present they LIVE, yet are hastening a-pace to the Miseries of the first two Classes; and these I reckon to be about 800.

4. There are yet remaining 200, more miserable than the worst of the other; and these are such as seem condemn'd to perpetual Imprisonment, seal'd up to Darkness and Oblivion, Men that ought to bid the World Good-Night. *Les Enfans Perdue*, in a true litteral Sence, *lost Men*, given up to Death, and murther'd by inexorable Creditors. Generally these are Sacrifices to Revenge, private Grudge, and every unchristian Passion; and such is the Severity of the late Act, that there seems no Possibility of Escape for them, *pay* they never *can*, and without *Pay* the Law *will not* release them. These are such as are in upon Extents from the Crown, or the new murthering Writ, *as I call it*, or Escape-Warrant, as the Law calls it; I believe, I am very much within Compass, when I reckon up these but 200, among whom are a great many Gentlemen of Worth, and of great Personal Merit, but unhappy to the last Degree; and some of these have continued in this Condition of the first Sort 8. 10. to 15 Years, till they are grown grey in their Misfortunes, and are quite lost to their Families; and of the last, several ever since the first Month of the Act, which is now about 5 Years old.

And now, Gentlemen, are these Men to be pitied or no? Is Human Nature so capable of Cruelty? Can it be imagin'd, that a Man who has lain 7, 8, or 10 Years in Prison can pay? Is it not Punishment enough to satisfie any Man's Revenge? Is it possible, the Rage of a Creditor can hold so long for a meer Debt? ——— If the Debtor cannot pay, and can give you an Account how he became unable, is it fit to keep a Fellow-Creature longer in Misery?

What signifies Acts of Parliament to relieve poor Creatures for Trifles, whose Circumstances are sometimes worse out than in? The Misery lies in these People I am speaking of, who are loaded with Debt as with a Crime unpardonable, that being perfectly unable, are kept up and continu'd unable, and punish'd more for Debt, than others are for Robbery.

But say some, they are not unable——— What, lie in Prison, and yet able to pay! What Sort of Creatures are they, and how will you convince any Man in the World, that a Man who lies in Prison is able to pay? —But suppose Human Nature so far degenerate, that a Man could choose a Prison with Knavery, rather than Liberty and Honesty. This might be for some Time. But how many Years could that Baseness of Spirit hold? I cannot but think it may be ventur'd upon as a true Rule, he that lies in Prison for Years and Ages, as 7. 10. 12. 15 Years, by the Obstinacy of a Creditor, it may be presum'd, is not able to pay and obtain his Liberty; Seven Year is a long Apprenticeship to a Gaol, and he that serves it, certainly wants Money to buy his Freedom, or else I know not what Rule to judge by.

I might now go back to our Laws, and it is not difficult to prove, that not only other Nations do not deal thus with their poor Insolvents, but also that it was not the